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TAGS: PREL KPAO KMDR ZI
SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S./IRAQ/NORTH KOREA STANDOFF;
HARARE

¶1. With headline "Under the specter of a third world war," the pro-government weekly "The Sunday Mirror" dedicated its January 5 editorial to encouraging the United States, at a time when a military showdown against Iraq seems inevitable, to resolve the nuclear standoff with North Korea peacefully.

Excerpts:

¶2. "In a statement he made last week, United States. . .President, George W. Bush, said he hoped the crisis over Iraqi arms could be overcome peacefully, to which the Iraqis retorted by saying that 'the dog's tail will never be straight,' and that it was hard to believe the American leader had 'suddenly become rational.' Indeed, Bush's statement was hard to believe, especially so when the U. S. has already assembled forces for possible military action in the Gulf region. Besides, Washington has already invoked the phrase that could trigger a war, accusing Iraq of being in 'material breach' of resolution 1441, the U. N. Security Council resolution designed to force Iraq to give up all weapons of mass destruction and threatening 'serious consequences' if it did not comply. . As the world waits anxiously for January 27, the date on which the U. N. weapons inspectors are required to report on their progress to the Security Council, the threat of war hangs ominously in the air. For, any report within the January 27 deadline that the inspectors' work is being obstructed could lead to an infliction of the 'serious consequences' on Iraq, as spelt out in resolution 1441.

¶3. Complicating this already war-charged atmosphere is North Korea's New Year's Eve expulsion of U. N. inspectors and its threats to withdraw from the non-proliferation treaty, under which it promised not to acquire nuclear weapons. Apparently, Korea secretly developed a uranium-enrichment program at its Yongbyon plant, even as U. N. inspectors were monitoring the country. It boldly declared its right to bear nuclear arms, arguing that after being described by Mr. Bush as part of an 'axis of evil,' along with Iran and Iraq, it considered itself a target of U. S. aggression. America's insistence that Pyongyang abandon its nuclear program before any talks could resume may have to soften in the face of certain recalcitrance by the Koreans. Otherwise, a rigid approach to resolving this stalemate may likely lead to war."

SULLIVAN